

Hatupatu and Kurungaituku the Birdwoman

Hatupatu lived with his whānau on Mokoia Island in the middle of Lake Rotorua. Growing up with his older brothers he was taught how to catch and trap birds on Mokoia to eat. The boys were such good hunters that their father told them to take gourds with them, travel across the water of Lake Rotorua and to hunt in the forests far away past Taupō and the smoking mountains beyond.



After their long journey the boys built a whare to sleep in and a pataka to store the food they would catch. Each day Hatupatu's brothers would go out hunting but he had to stay behind to guard the pataka. Hatupatu got so hungry one day that he broke open some of the gourds and ate the food stored inside.

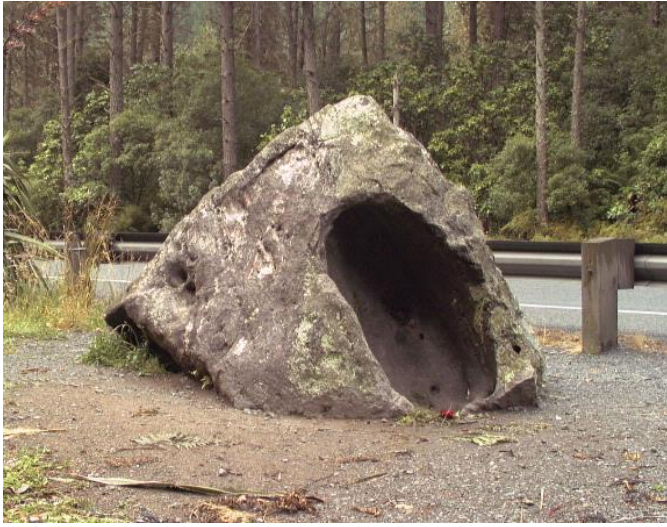
When his brothers got back from hunting they saw the broken gourds. What happened? they asked. Hatupatu lied and said enemies had come but his brothers saw his greasy face and left over bones. They were so angry that they chased Hatupatu deep into the forest. Hatupatu was cold, hungry and scared.

Deep in the forest he was startled by a movement, he threw his spear. However it wasn't a bird he hit, but a large creature Kurungaituku, the bird woman. Kurungaituku was angry I shall eat this boy she thought. But Hatupatu was all skin and bones so she decided to fatten him up first. She beakoned with her claw for Hatupatu to come and meet her friends in a cave.



In the cave were lots of different birds Weka, Tui, Kiwi, Riroriro, Piwakawaka, Pukeko, Kereru and Kakapo. Kurungaituku trapped Hatupatu in the cave. Hatupatu needed an escape, so he tricked Kurungaituku. He told her that over the big hills she would find a find a Kaka, a precious and rare bird. While Kurungaituku was away looking for it Hatupatu finally escaped. But the small and tiny grey riroriro (Kuraungaituku's favourite bird) flew swiftly to tell the bird woman that Hatupatu had gone.





Hatupatu was running home as fast as he could. As he headed Taupō towards Lake Atiamuri, he heard the screeches and flapping wings of Kuraungaituku. Oh no he would surely be caught! Just then he saw a strange rock, it had a hole in it perfect for hiding. In he crept and quickly called out the special words “Matiti, matata” the rock closed behind him. Kuraungaituku scratched at the rock with her beak and claws but she could not break open the rock. Finally she gave up and flew away.

When he was sure she had gone Hatupatu crept out of the rock and continued his journey back towards Mokoia. But Kuraungaituku was flying high in the sky and saw him. Down she flew. Hatupatu ran faster he just had to make his way through the hot pools at the edge of the forest and into the area known today as Te Whakarewarewa

Quickly but carefully he ran around the hotpools, he knew the area well. Kuraungaituku landed and chased. She tried to grab him but missed and fell screeching into a hot bubbling mud pool.

Hatupatu lived to tell the tale but that was the end of Kurungaituku the Birdwoman. Her name lives on as part of this story and in more modern times in the name of a netball tournament held every year.

